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## **CHAPTER 12. CHURCH, LEADERSHIP, AND LEADER EDUCATION ON A CROSSROADS: SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS, CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

### **12.1 Introduction**

This chapter seeks to answer, in a concise manner, the research questions with which we embarked on this research project. In this way a summary of this thesis is provided that we hope is useful for the reader. In addition, we formulate our concluding reflections on the main findings of this thesis, which will include a few suggestions for further research.

### **12.2 What Is the Historical Background of the Emerging-Missional Conversation and What Are Its Main Theological Characteristics?**

We coined the term 'Emerging-Missional Conversation' (EMC) for the purpose of this thesis to refer to a range of discourse about important beliefs and practices that are the common focus of interest, concern and conversation in two movements: the Emerging Church Movement and the Missional Church Movement. We comment upon these movements in the next two subsections, which together provide an answer to our first research question, and close with a few concluding reflections (12.2.3).

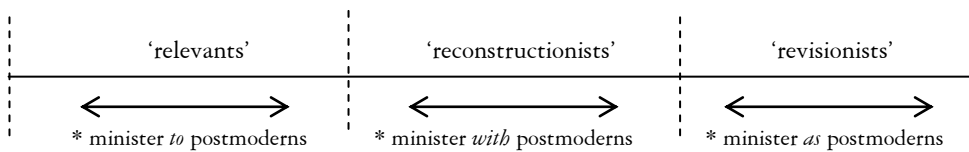
#### *12.2.1 The Emerging Church Movement*

Much of the focus and language and many of the programs of the institutional churches no longer connect with people in Western countries. Since the 1990s, creative and innovative Christians, propelled by a mixture of longing, curiosity and discontent, have been experimenting with different kinds of worship and Christian communities that are deliberately geared to a changing culture. These communities are variously called 'fresh expressions of church' or 'mission-shaped churches' (particularly in the UK); 'emerging missional churches' (in Australia and New Zealand); 'emerging churches', or 'missional churches' (in many Western countries, particularly in North America). 'Emerging Church Movement' is often used as an umbrella term to refer to a wide variety of persons and groups that meet each other in internet chat rooms, websites and blogs, at regional, national and international gatherings, through books, articles, CDs, DVDs, and so on. Within the Emerging Church Movement some groups and individuals are on a 'reactive' path. They react against the traditional church and are less focused on reaching the unchurched or post-churched. Many other persons and communities have embarked on a 'pro-active' path. They are particularly interested in mission and in the

question what being church means in a what is often called a ‘postmodern’, ‘post-Christendom’ society. Generally speaking, the groups in the Emerging Church Movement are dynamic and flexible, contextual and mission-minded, innovative and focused on relations and community. Typical of the movement is a relational ecclesiology in which the church is understood as a network of relationships.

It is not possible to describe *the* theology of the Emerging Church Movement. We may, however, roughly sketch a spectrum by using the ‘ideal types’ of relevants, reconstructionists, and revisionists.

*Figure 1. Three Streams of the Spectrum within the Emerging Church Movement*



'Relevants' minister *to* postmoderns, purposefully trying to reach postmoderns with the gospel. Relevants hold on to conservative evangelical doctrines, but at the same time, they are open to culture, including using advanced digital technologies. They see this approach as suitable for a pluralistic and diverse culture.

'Reconstructionists' minister *with* postmoderns. Their plea for reconstructing leadership, church structure, the role of a pastor, spiritual formation, how community is lived out, and related issues is more explicit than among relevants. N.T. Wright and Lesslie Newbigin are two influential theologians among reconstructionists.

'Revisionists' minister *as* postmoderns. They emphasize an experiential, socially activist, inclusive, pluralist, pilgrims-on-the-way, this-world affirming community, and a theology that is local, conversational, and temporary. The theologians Stanley Grenz and Jürgen Moltmann are often referred to in revisionists' writings, but the diversity in this third stream is large.

Differences among and within these three streams notwithstanding, many authors in the Emerging Church Movement emphasize that (a) God is a missionary God who sends the church into the world and (b) that this 'sentness' has all kinds of practical implications for church life, including its worship. Moreover, they speak of the church as a *missional church*, i.e. a community of God's people that defines itself, and organizes its life around its real purpose of being an agent of God's mission to the world. A missional church is open to innovation, experimentation, and creativity, because it is called to contextualize ('incarnate') itself within a specific setting. Authors in the emerging church converge with prominent opinion leaders in the missional church to the extent that they reflect first and foremost on God's presence in the world and in the midst of the church. In other words, we find a focal point of the Emerging-Missional Conversation there.

### 12.2.2 *The Missional Church Movement and Its Shared Interests with the Emerging Church Movement*

A comparable breadth to that which characterizes the Emerging Church Movement can be found in the Missional Church Movement, which has its roots in the American-based Gospel and Our Culture Network. From the early 1990's on, the activities of this network have been focused on cultural research (such as the impact of shifts from modernity to postmodernity and from Christendom to post-Christendom), theological reflection, and the church renewal necessary for the recovery of the church's missionary identity. In this context, the concept of a 'missional church' was introduced and the term 'Missional Church Movement' first began to be used. Generally speaking, many leading voices in the Missional Church Movement are academics belonging to mainline churches, who often stand at a critical distance from postmodern culture. Many contributors to Emerging Church Movement conversations, on the other hand, are low church Protestants – 'lay' practitioners rather than scholars – and people of action who are quite open to the cultural changes discernable in postmodernity.

These differences notwithstanding, the Emerging and Missional movements do have shared interests. The 'crossing' of the two movements can be discerned in the theological motif concerning the mission of the Triune God in and for the world, in which the church is called to participate in the form of incarnational, missional communities. Furthermore, opinion leaders in both movements agree that there is no 'model' congregation, nor a standardized policy, because the church is responsible to translate the good news of the gospel along with its organizational reality into every cultural context that it encounters. Consequently, they believe that leaders of missional churches need skills in spiritual formation and missional encounter as well as organizational development and management of complex systems. Thus, the missional vocation and identity of the church has clear implications for church structure and leadership, and, consequently, leader education.

### 12.2.3 *Concluding Reflections*

We submit our concluding reflections on the subject of the first research question in the following three points.

1. One of the main contributions of the EMC lies in its role as a catalyst for the worldwide church, for example, by stimulating joint conversations<sup>1</sup> and reflection on questions such as the following: is it biblically and theologically correct to see the church as missional, i.e. participating in God's mission, and what exactly do we mean by this? If it appears to be justified and, indeed, of strategic importance to define the church in 'mis-

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Stuart Murray, "Hope for the future of the church in Western culture does not lie with the inherited church. Nor does it lie with the emerging church. It lies in *conversations* [emphasis added] between inherited and emerging churches that enable each other to learn from the other and together find fresh ways of incarnating the gospel in a changing and diverse culture." As quoted in Michael Moynagh, *Emerging church.intro* (Oxford, UK: Monarch, 2004), 153.

sional' terms, what are the consequences for its structures, its leadership, and its leader education? And what does being missional entail, in various local contexts, for "ways of speaking, everyday acts of embodiment, the design of institutions, and desired aesthetics"?<sup>2</sup> In addition to stimulating dialogue, the EMC can help to bring about a crossover of vision, ideas and experiences. As David Boshart writes, "Collecting stories from situations of church planting domestically and internationally that speak to the issue of being hosted by a context could evoke imaginative learning for both developing and existing congregations in thinking about the nature of the church as sent rather than being a rooted institution."<sup>3</sup>

2. Communities who describe themselves in emerging or missional terms, or perhaps both, may be regarded as constituting an important 'Research & Development department' of the church.<sup>4</sup> We estimate that churches such as the Protestant Church in the Netherlands or the Reformed churches (liberated) may learn much from these communities, in particular in so far<sup>5</sup> as they represent the following:

- \* creative, experiential, flexible, missional, participative and spiritual worship practices<sup>6</sup> – with due attention for the spatial dimension<sup>7</sup> – and theological reflections on (missional) worship that undergird these;<sup>8</sup>

- \* forms of authentic, hospitable, inclusive, 'centred-set' community in which people are invited even before they are Christians, and which exemplify the biblical truth that "personal salvation is a community-creating event";<sup>9</sup>

<sup>2</sup> James S. Bielo, *Emerging Evangelicals: Faith, Modernity, and the Desire for Authenticity* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 119.

<sup>3</sup> David W. Boshart, *Becoming Missional: Denominations and New Church Development in Complex Social Contexts* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 147.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. the comment of the 'traditionalist' seminary dean David Johnson: "I believe that the emerging churches are onto something that is being missed by a lot of static churches at the beginning of the twenty-first century." David H. Johnson, "Emerging Churches: Reflections From A Traditionalist Seminary Dean," *Didaskalia* (Winter 2008), 174.

<sup>5</sup> This way of putting it leaves room for the gap between EMC ideals/rhetoric and the reality that empirical researchers may encounter in the Emerging-Missional milieu.

<sup>6</sup> One important facet concerns the (often weekly celebrated) Eucharist. See Janine Morgan, "Emerging Eucharist: Formative Ritualizing in British Emerging Churches," (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Richard Giles, "Liturgically Informed Buildings," in Steven Croft and Ian Mobsby, eds., *Fresh Expressions in the Sacramental Tradition* (London: Canterbury Press, 2009), 116-136; William R. McAlpine, *Sacred Space for the Missional Church: Engaging Culture through the Built Environment* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011); Karyn L. Wiseman, "Grace Space: The Creation of Worship Space for the Postmodern/Emerging Church," (PhD diss., Drew University, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> The Dutch practical theologian Gerrit Immink, a professor at the PThU, recently wrote a book on worship, *Het heilige gebeurt. Praktijk, theologie en traditie van de protestantse eredienst* [The holy happens: Practice, theology and tradition of protestant worship] (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2011). This publication does not contain any references to the worship practices in emerging churches nor to the rich reflections on worship such as can be found in the EMC. We consider this to be a missed opportunity.

<sup>9</sup> Joseph H. Hellerman, *When the Church Was a Family: Recapturing Jesus' Vision for Authentic Christian Community* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2009), 143.

\* an holistic faith that is – both in prayer and action – centered on the mission of the Triune God, which leads to personal, communal, and social transformation,<sup>10</sup> and in which young people are enabled and encouraged to participate.<sup>11</sup>

3. A mixed economy, or in a more organic metaphor: ‘mixed ecology’, consisting of a close collaboration between existing and emerging churches may, in many contexts, be the best way forward. Such forms of collaboration may help new forms of church to develop both collectivist practices that allow for flexibility, responsiveness and meaning, and bureaucratic practices that afford fairness, efficiency, and stability. Without proper attention to this last dimension, many emerging churches may not be able to endure in the long term.

To these reflections we add three suggestions for further research.

1. The relations between emerging-missional communities and unchurched people are yet to be analyzed in detail in various sub-cultural and local contexts. A leading question in this endeavor could be what ‘missional’ means – in actual practice – for these relations.
2. We expect that relevant insights – in particular in regard to leadership, spiritual formation, and local mission – can be obtained by systematically comparing characteristics of innovative, team-led, mission-minded Roman Catholic parishes<sup>12</sup> or Small Christian Communities (SCC’s)<sup>13</sup> on the one hand, and protestant emerging-missional communities in specific local or regional contexts on the other hand.<sup>14</sup>
3. Comparative case-studies may be conducted on how forms of collaboration between existing churches and fresh expressions of church are given form in practice in different contexts and what problematic and positive experiences are encountered in this endeavor.

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<sup>10</sup> For example, Brad Cecil observed the following five paths to transformation in his community called Axxess (Arlington, Texas): cognitive (studying the Scriptures), contemplative (practices like meditation and prayer), ascetic (service to others), expressivist (self-expression, e.g. through storytelling and the arts), and communitarian (shared lives). See Brad Cecil, “I Told You We Weren’t Crazy,” in Mike Yaconelli, ed., *Stories of Emergence: Moving from Absolute to Authentic* (El Cajon, CA: Zondervan/YS, 2003), 176.

<sup>11</sup> Youth work in the Emerging-Missional milieu is focused on creativity, community, worship, holistic mission, mentoring, discipleship, and relationships. See Brian Kirk and Jacob Thorne, *Missional Youth Ministry: Moving From Gathering Teenagers to Scattering Disciples* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan/YS, 2011); Tim Sudworth, with Graham Cray and Chris Russell, *Mission-Shaped Youth: Rethinking Young People and Church* (London: Church House Publishing, 2007); Alison and David Booker, eds., *Young People and Mission: A Practical Guide* (London: Church House Publishing, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Marti R. Jewell and David A. Ramey, *The Changing Face of Church: Emerging Models of Parish Leadership* (Chicago, IL: Loyola Press, 2010), chap. 7, n114 and n151, and chap. 8, n18.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. chap. 7, n19 and n88. On SCC’s in the Anglican Church, see Jeanne Hinton and Peter B. Price, *Changing Communities: Church from the Grassroots* (London: Church House Publishing, 2003). In the Netherlands, there are – as of yet – only a few SCC’s to be found. See Kees Slijkerman, “Tips en tools, methodes en literatuur,” in Kees Slijkerman en Fred van Iersel, eds., *Kleine geloofsgroepen. Wegen naar een vitale parochie* (Heeswijk: Abdij van Berne, 2011), 102.

<sup>14</sup> A short comparison, that begs to be further unpacked, is provided in R.J.A. Doornenbal, “Emerging Churches, Small Christian Communities, en ‘organisch’ leiderschap,” *Sophie* 1 (February 2012), 44-47.

### 12.3 What is Characteristic of the Discourse about Culture, Church, and Leadership within the EMC?

This question encompasses four sub-questions: How does the concept of paradigm function within the EMC? (12.3.1); What is meant within the EMC by the terms ‘postmodern’ and ‘post-Christendom’ and (how) are these terms appropriate to describe developments in Western countries in general, and in the Netherlands in particular? (12.3.2); What are the motives for using metaphors in the EMC, in what way are they used, and how is this to be evaluated? (12.3.3); In what way does complexity theory contribute to thought on church organizations and leadership, according to opinion leaders in the EMC and current scholarship? (12.3.4)

#### 12.3.1 *How Does the Concept of Paradigm Function within the EMC?*

In the EMC, the term ‘paradigm’ is used, often implicitly, on three distinguishable levels: a general macro level, an intermediate meso level and a more specific micro level. On the macro level, the concept of paradigm basically overlaps with that of worldview, or equivalent concepts such as mental model, map of the world, or framework. On a meso level, the word paradigm refers to certain beliefs, values and commitments regarding subjects such as leadership, e.g., a new missional leadership paradigm. Paradigms at the micro level are concerned with concrete guidelines for action on specified subjects, such as adopting transformissional coaching as a new paradigm.

Furthermore, the term paradigm is used in descriptive and normative ways. A descriptive claim is that a major paradigm shift is underway or that it has already been effected, e.g. a shift from Christendom to post-Christendom. A normative claim is that a paradigm shift should be embarked upon, e.g. shifting from a Christendom mode of church to a missional church.

Some influential EMC writers indicate how a ‘paradigm shift’ impacted their own lives. Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost, for instance, have felt the radical impact of a paradigm shift regarding the embracing, and the subsequent living out, of a missionary identity. And Alan Roxburgh describes a paradigm shift in his understanding of church leadership: from a phenomenon that can be thought of in terms of linearity, cause-and-effect, to a network of dynamic, uncontrollable interrelationships among ordinary people in local contexts where the Spirit is at work.

The literature of the EMC often contains sharp juxtapositions of old and new paradigms or worldviews. Here, an echo can be heard of the so-called incommensurability thesis of the first (1962) edition of Thomas Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Kuhn suggested that the proponents of competing paradigms practice their trades in different worlds and that their different paradigms are ‘incommensurable’. When this line of thinking is applied in the EMC, this can easily lead to people, groups, or institutions being categorized in terms of, for example, ‘missional’ or ‘non-missional’, which violates the more complex and dynamic reality. The first *caveat* concerning the function

of ‘paradigm-language’ within the EMC is the implicit suggestion of incommensurability. The second one is closely related: because paradigm thinking emphasizes dichotomies and tends to simplistically delegitimize opposing views as antiquated, it can lead one to give up on having a reasonable conversation with people who are perceived as holding onto another paradigm. In short, paradigm thinking easily gains ideological overtones. This is also the case within the EMC.

#### 12.3.1.1 Concluding Reflections

Although speaking in terms of paradigms can have negative repercussions, as we argued above, it also has the potential to lead us to question the axioms, presuppositions, theories, or interpretative lenses which all of us use – often unreflectively – and through which we view the world, read the Bible, think about the church, and so on. One example that we think is particularly pertinent for protestant churches in the Netherlands concerns what we propose to call the ‘preaching and preacher centered paradigm’, i.e. the presupposition that the Sunday morning sermon is (or should be) the most important event in the week and that the person who delivers it, the preacher, *de facto* is the most important person in the church. Some of our critical questions and suggestions for further research in this regard are the following. To what extent and how is this paradigm indeed operative within Dutch protestant churches, and what factors are involved in this? Is this paradigm confirmed by Scripture when read with a missional hermeneutic?<sup>15</sup> To mention just one sub-issue on this topic: what are characteristics of the preaching of (among others) Peter and Paul and how does this compare to present day preaching in Dutch protestant churches such as the PKN or the Reformed churches (liberated)? Furthermore, what is the empirical evidence for supposing that the solution for the current crisis in the church consists in better preaching,<sup>16</sup> as is often suggested?<sup>17</sup> Without denying the relevance of excellent preaching, as *one* element of worship,<sup>18</sup> how can other elements been given more attention, such as holistic (i.e., involving the five senses) worship experiences, community (for example through the meal)<sup>19</sup>, spiritual for-

<sup>15</sup> A fine product of such a reading is Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006).

<sup>16</sup> In her analysis of conversion narratives, the Dutch anthropologist and theologian Miranda Klaver “puts forward the importance of emotions, affects and bodily experience of (potential) converts, emphasizing the sensuous aspects of religion and the imaginations it cultivates, and acknowledging people's desires.” Miranda Klaver, *This Is My Desire: A Semiotic Perspective on Conversion in an Evangelical Seeker Church and a Pentecostal Church in the Netherlands* (Amsterdam: Pallas Publications, 2011), 396. Klaver found out that, among other things, *music* proved to be far more influential in people's trajectories of conversion than sermons.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Wim Dekker, *Marginaal en missionair. Kleine theologie voor een krimpende kerk* [Marginal and missionary: A small theology for a shrinking church] (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2011), 101 ff. See also Immink, *Het heilige gebeurt*, which devotes many of its pages to the topic of preaching.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Michael W. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations: The Missional Church and the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 204 ff.

<sup>19</sup> Alan and Eleanor Kreider ask attention for the fact that worship services in the early church were meal-based. Alan and Eleanor Kreider, *Worship and Mission After Christendom* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2009), 73-93. In contrast, “the meal-less, monological cultures of most churches [today] are disappointing



mation in small groups,<sup>20</sup> and mission?<sup>21</sup> We hope that this kind of questioning can facilitate the emergence of constructive conversations that are conducive of innovation and mission. In so far as paradigm language helps to achieve this, it is – to our mind – helpful.

The use of paradigm language can, in addition, assist in making sense of the cultural changes we experience,<sup>22</sup> and of the sometimes deep differences between people in how they evaluate these changes. It is also justly pointed out within the EMC that church leaders should be aware of their own paradigms, and that one of their tasks is to help uncover operating assumptions or mental maps – for example, about leadership – within the community that they serve. Negatively speaking, an ecclesial system's dedication to unexamined assumptions about leadership undermines its potential.

### *12.3.2 What Is Meant within the EMC by the Terms 'Postmodern' and 'Post-Christendom' and (How) Are These Terms Appropriate to Describe Developments in Western Countries in General, and in the Netherlands in Particular?*

As to the term 'postmodern', two lines can be detected in the EMC. The first line focuses on postmodernism, i.e. on academic claims and discussions. Revisionists take over aspects of postmodern discourse much more than relevantists or reconstructionists do, thereby generating interpretations that are not always satisfactory. For example, revisionists treat the Enlightenment without paying close attention to themes like difference, plurality, or internal tensions. This is ironic, because these are typical postmodern sensibilities. Another irony is that revisionists claim to be very critical of modernity. However, the thought that Christianity is a life, not a doctrine, which is promoted within the more progressive parts of the EMC, is itself a product of modernity.

The second line in the EMC deals with socio-cultural shifts within modern societies which cumulatively inaugurate a condition of 'postmodernity'. This term refers primarily to the popular level: pop music, shopping malls, television, the workplace, a consu-

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to many people who have completed the Alpha Courses." Ibid., 119. Cf. Henk de Roest, who considers the meal to be of "central significance" in new churches. Henk de Roest, *Een huis voor de ziel. Gedachten over de kerk voor binnen en buiten* [A home for the soul: Thoughts about the church for inside and outside] (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2010), 169. Interestingly, recent scholarship confirms that the meal was also central in the earliest Christian community gatherings: "the origins of the Christian sermon are probably lying in the conversations in the after-supper assemblies of Christians," and the word *homilia* that came to be used to designate preaching "has a connotation of intimacy and familiarity, of friendly converse and persuasive argumentation, with overtones of serious intent and instruction." Valeriy Alikin, *The Earliest History of the Christian Gathering: Origin, Development and Content of the Christian Gathering in the First to Third Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 185-186.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. the conclusion of Roger Gehring, "The worldwide ecclesial and missional contribution of a small group, be it a house church in the full sense or a home group for Bible study, fellowship, prayer, and/or social involvement, training for lay leaders, or evangelistic discussion, cannot be valued too highly." Roger W. Gehring, *House Church and Mission: The Importance of Household Structures in Early Christianity* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 309.

<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, these elements do not receive serious attention (if any at all) in Immink, *Het heilige gebeurt*.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. the paragraph *Paradigmawisseling* [paradigm shift] in Dekker, *Marginaal en missionair*, 201-203.

merist mentality, and so on. This emphasis is seen especially in publications of relevant and reconstructionist authors. In the EMC, postmodernity is variously described as a consciousness, condition, environment, ethos, mindset, mood, sensibility, or *Zeitgeist*. Its influence is seen manifested in various ways, such as decentralization and fluid networks, pick-and-mix lifestyles, and eclectic approaches to spirituality. 'Postmodernity', then, functions as an umbrella term that covers various contemporary cultural and social processes in the Western world, the Netherlands included. Contemporary sociological research and theorizing, while using a variety in terminology, does affirm that the implications of late or postmodernity deserve to be taken seriously, as participants in the EMC attempt to do.

The following *caveats* are in order, however. (1) It seems safest to use postmodernity as a term defining a state of transition, rather than describing a set of boundaries marking an historical era. One reason for this is that there are many continuities between modernity and postmodernity, such as an emphasis on personal autonomy and authenticity. (2) Regional differences have to be taken into account. For example, in the Dutch Bible Belt, influences of postmodernity are probably less obvious than outside it. (3) The fact that churches and Christians are challenged by the shift from modernity to postmodernity or late modernity, does not mean that they themselves should 'become' postmodern, as especially revisionist voices are prone to suggest. It is unwise to equate the *missio Dei* with present historical developments.

Within the EMC, the shift from Christendom to post-Christendom has two descriptive senses. It refers, first, to dynamics in the socio-political domain: in Western Europe, generally speaking, the tight conglomerate of civilization, territory and ideology called 'Christendom' is crumbling. Secondly, it alludes to a changing mindset, one example of which is that Christianity gradually loses its predominant and familiar status, particularly among the younger generations. Presently, only a small minority of the people in Europe give their loyalty to the church.

In regard to the Netherlands, sociological research does confirm a shift from Christendom to Post-Christendom. As to the socio-political reality, the church no longer leads in the establishment of institutions and the formulation of laws – as in the days of Christendom; a plurality of religious and secular groups have taken her place. As to mindset, church and Christianity are of only marginal importance to most Dutch citizens. Perhaps more pointedly than the term 'secularization', the word post-Christendom focuses on the growing irrelevance of the institutional churches in the Dutch society, without thereby implying that Dutch people are becoming less religious (or 'spiritual').

#### 12.3.2.1 Concluding Reflections

The interaction of gospel, church and culture is one of the central themes in the EMC. In this conversation, large scale cultural changes in Western society are described in terms of a 'shift from modernity to postmodernity', or 'from Christendom to post-Christ-

tendom'. With some *caveats* that we mentioned above, we think this description is justified, while in our estimation the term 'post-Christendom' is especially important because of its heuristic sense.<sup>23</sup> It may, for one, encourage us to be wary of uncritically identifying the Christian faith with current church forms. Moreover, in Christendom thinking, mission in the local context often receives little emphasis, because churches and ministers tend to concentrate upon the pastoral care of their people and the maintenance of their structures.<sup>24</sup>

That being said, we suspect that it might well be the case that most who participate in the Emerging-Missional milieu do not commonly think and speak in terms of 'post-modernity' with the exception of its opinion leaders and wellknown authors. Our understanding of this milieu would be improved if more empirical research were conducted on this point of day-to-day discourse.<sup>25</sup> This may result in more precise language to describe the characteristics of (parts of) the Emerging-Missional milieu.

Our second reflection concerns the fact that many EMC publications (sometimes implicitly) suggest that the social-cultural condition of postmodernity is somehow better than that of modernity, and that post-Christendom characteristics are to be preferred over Christendom ones. We think that the reality is more ambiguous. For example, the empirical research conducted by David Boshart made clear that a "post-Christendom worldview" entails – among other things – a "low sense of commitment to organized religion...that makes participation less than top priority."<sup>26</sup> Such a mentality can hardly be said to be conducive for the forming of an intentional missional community. Furthermore, it is generally acknowledged by sociologists that late modernity or postmodernity is characterized by 'consumerism', even more so than is the case with modernity. In such a cultural context, it is to be expected that many Christians today are easily attracted to a church that provides for their felt personal needs. A postmodern mindset – in so far as this denotes a consumerist mindset – may thus stand in the way of people's commitment to new, uncertain and possibly exacting missional initiatives.<sup>27</sup>

This brings us to the following suggestion for further research. We plead for more empirical studies on Christian groups in the Western world which strive after forming a community of generosity and simplicity (of 'enough') in a consumer world; a community of selfless giving in a world of selfishness and entitlement; a community of hope in a

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<sup>23</sup> It is regrettable that Immink's *Het heilige gebeurt* does not contain reflections on recent developments in Dutch culture and society (and those in the Western world in general). It might be true that the shift from Christendom to post-Christendom and the social and cultural developments in late or postmodernity do not, as of yet, have a great impact on the conservative Reformed constituencies in the Bible Belt (on which Immink's book focuses) but they are still felt, and, we submit should certainly influence thinking about worship today.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Arenda Haasnoot, *Neem je plaats in. In de tussentijd van kerk en koninkrijk* [Take in your place: In the in-between times of church and kingdom] (Amsterdam: Ark Media, 2011), 61-62.

<sup>25</sup> A good example here is Bielo, *Emerging Evangelicals*, which is focused on the American scene.

<sup>26</sup> Boshart, *Becoming Missional*, 80.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 47.

world of disillusionment and consumer satiation; a community of justice in a world of economic and ecological injustice; and a community of joy and thanksgiving in a hedonistic world that frantically pursues pleasure.<sup>28</sup>

### 12.3.3 *What Are the Motives for Using Metaphors in the EMC, and in What Way Are They Used?*

One reason that EMC writers make abundant use of metaphors is their assumption that this kind of pictorial language is an optimal tool for communicating with ‘postmoderns’, who are supposed to be more open to non-propositional language. A deeper motive is that metaphors – as a form of pictorial, suggestive, and multi-interpretable language – are believed to fit the more humble epistemology they seek, which is tolerant of diversity and ambiguity and open to mystery. Furthermore, the fact that metaphors have an inherent characteristic of change, dynamism and movement fits the *Zeitgeist* of postmodernity as well as the predilections of many EMC participants themselves, as does the fact that the use of metaphorical language is related to creativity, allusiveness, and imagination.

An important way in which metaphor is used in the EMC is as an heuristic instrument to stimulate the imagination and evoke new perspectives on reality. Metaphors such as catalyst,<sup>29</sup> or jazz band leader,<sup>30</sup> may influence how we think about church leadership. Furthermore, some EMC authors acknowledge that some metaphors can affect not only someone’s view but even his (future) actions. Examples of such metaphors in EMC literature are those that refer to chaos theory or to ‘holistic’ thinking.

In a critical discussion this chapter submits that some of the adopted metaphors in the EMC are quite banal, especially when they are used to disparage ‘modern’ forms of Christianity. However, many others – including metaphors that concern leadership, or the church – are arguably highly creative and original, and can thereby generate imaginative thinking or provide tools for deconstructing or questioning one’s assumptions. Still other metaphors risk being used in an ideological way, as rhetorical tools that leave little room for other views or for correction. If EMC authors forget that metaphors are merely metaphors, their rhetoric may become reductionistic, with unfortunate ideological implications. Furthermore, EMC writers have yet to explain how they distinguish between true and false metaphors, and on the basis of what criteria.

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Goheen, *A Light to the Nations*, 208-211.

<sup>29</sup> Catalysts depend on trust, inspiration, collaboration, and emotional intelligence; their job is to create personal relationships. On catalyst leadership, see 5.3.1.

<sup>30</sup> Jazz is about – among other things – projecting personality and individuality in the context of a group. This last aspect includes listening and submitting oneself to the gift of another, which “requires humility, trust and discipline.” Jeanne Hinton and Peter B. Price, *Changing Communities: Church from the Grassroots* (London: Church House Publishing, 2003), 27.

### 12.3.3.1 Concluding Reflections

Many writers in the EMC have a keen eye for the allusive nature of metaphor,<sup>31</sup> which leads us into the intermediate area between poetry and reality, between creative imagination and the world outside. Furthermore, they perceive correctly that new metaphors can change our way of looking at things, and that they can even affect one's worldview. The literature of the EMC, moreover, rightly emphasizes that metaphor is an important communicative device in leadership, for example in processes of sense-making (e.g., "What metaphor fits our community?"), envisioning,<sup>32</sup> or cultural formation.<sup>33</sup> Our proposal for those who are involved in theological education, therefore, is to give sustained attention to the 'metaphors we lead by'.<sup>34</sup> It is also relevant to analyze metaphors about leadership itself, since they influence how people think about the nature and purpose of leadership, actions associated with leadership activity, traits associated with effective leadership, or about their own leadership roles. More generally speaking, the facilitative role of metaphors in leader education is increasingly recognized.<sup>35</sup> In addition, it is helpful for teachers to be aware of the 'metaphors they teach by',<sup>36</sup> for example in regard to assessment, as well as to their metaphors for learning.<sup>37</sup>

In our opinion, EMC authors are also right to call attention to metaphors as a crucial conduit for communicating with 'postmoderns'. Particularly people who daily communicate by means of icons depicted on the various electronic devices they interact with at

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<sup>31</sup> See on metaphorical likening as a matter of *allusion* (i.e., a form of referential action at a distance): Catherine Z. Elgin, "Metaphor and Reference," in: Zdravko Radman, ed., *From a Metaphorical Point of View: A Multidisciplinary Approach to the Cognitive Content of Metaphor* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 66ff.

<sup>32</sup> For example, in a Roman Catholic parish in Tilburg, the Netherlands, the metaphor of the 'inn' [*herberg*] proved to be very inspiring for the policy makers, and later on, for many other parishioners as well. The parish-as-inn eventually turned out to be the key stone in the policy plan of this parish. Jan Hendriks, *Op weg naar de Herberg. Bouwen aan een open kerk* [On the road to the Inn: Building at an open church] (Kampen: Kok, 2002), 111-115.

<sup>33</sup> For example, 'Doing church like a river' is one of the central metaphors that the church staff of River Chapel, Missouri uses to describe their organization and the ideal relationships that members should have with one another. "More than any other metaphor, 'doing church like a river' captures the sense in which the people are encouraged to get onboard with the strategies and goals of the organization or move on to find another church." Kevin L. McElmurry, "Alone/Together: The Production of a Religious Culture in a Church for the Unchurched," (PhD diss., University of Missouri, 2009), 217.

<sup>34</sup> Mats Alvesson and André Spicer, *Metaphors We Lead By: Understanding Leadership in the Real World* (London, UK: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Kathryn Singh, "Metaphor as a Tool in Educational Leadership Classrooms," *Management in Education* 24, no. 3 (2010), 127-131; Tom D. Taber, "Using Metaphors to Teach Organization Theory," *Journal of Management Education* 31, no. 4 (August 2007), 541-554. Cf. also chap. 11, n70.

<sup>36</sup> Alicia J. Batten, "Metaphors We Teach By: The Language of 'Learning Outcomes'," *Teaching Theology and Religion* 15, no. 1 (January 2012), 16-28.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Sami Paavola and Kai Hakkarainen, "Metaphors of learning not only help one to explain processes involved in learning, but they can also serve as tools to improve and understand the quality of learning and transforming the educational system. Thus, the metaphors of learning should also guide students, teachers, and researchers to develop new practices of learning and instruction to cope with all the cognitive, social, and motivational challenges of the emerging knowledge based society." Sami Paavola and Kai Hakkarainen, "Knowledge Creation Metaphor – An Emergent Epistemological Approach to Learning," *Science & Education* 14 (2005), 548.

work or at play, may respond more favorably to forms of ‘iconic’ language and symbolizing (for example through metaphorical artwork)<sup>38</sup>, than to propositions. This is an additional reason why the topic of metaphor deserves to be taken seriously.

As to further research, it would be interesting to study how forms of pictorial language function in the day-to-day discourse among participants in emerging churches, in their worship services (and artwork), in their communicating with unchurched or post-church ‘postmoderns’, and in leadership processes. Furthermore, the use and function of non-linguistic metaphors – such as in sculpted artifacts or pictures – in the Emerging-Missional milieu is yet to be described and analyzed.

#### *12.3.4 In What Way Does Complexity Theory Contribute to Thought on Church Organizations and Leadership, According to Opinion Leaders in the EMC and Current Scholarship?*

Complexity theory can be described as the study of the dynamics of so-called ‘complex adaptive systems’ that are non-linear and have self-organizing attributes and emergent properties. Within the EMC the relevance of complexity theory – including theories of emergence – is perceived to lie on three terrains in particular.

1. Complexity theory – the expression ‘new sciences’ is sometimes used in the EMC – is connected to an alternative worldview that is holistic in nature. An holistic worldview emphasizes imaginative reason, the use of metaphor, and thinking in terms of change, and it underlines the interdependency and connectivity in our world. Concurrently, in the church and elsewhere, the aspects of relations, community, conversation, and cooperation are emphasized.
2. Complexity theory provides attractive and fruitful perspectives, and appealing metaphors, on what the church is perceived to be: a self-organizing, complex, adaptive, self-regulating system, with an inherent capacity for ‘environmental’, i.e. contextual adaptation. *Change* is seen as a continuous and existential process in which all elements of a Christian community – which is conceived of as a complex adaptive system – participate.
3. Complexity theory gives a clue about the role of leaders in churches that emerge, viz., *not* to plan and subsequently announce change, but to resource it, by facilitating free information flows and intensive communication between all members of the commu-

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<sup>38</sup> One moving example of this is recounted by the atheist writer Nick Croston, who is a regular visitor of the emerging faith community of Wicker Park Grace, Chicago. On Good Friday, they had gathered a group of artists to retell the story of the passion in the form of Stations of the Cross. Croston reflected afterwards, “On the day we opened the Stations of the Cross...the music, light, and contemplative quiet of the exhibit impacted me in a way that no religion ever had before. As I walked and looked at the Stations, I let my atheism simmer as the *highly metaphorical artwork* [emphasis added] made me think, for the first time, about how Jesus must have felt....I was speechless.” Nick Croston, as quoted in Nanette Sawyer, “The Imperative of Imagination,” in Phil Snider, ed., *The Hyphenateds: How Emergence Christianity Is Re-Traditioning Mainline Practices* (St. Louis, MI: Chalice Press, 2011), 77-78.

nity. In addition, church structures should help increase adaptability and flexibility, and above all, the sense of responsibility of each individual for the community as a whole.

We argue that EMC authors rightly perceive the potential of complexity theory for thinking about aspects of church organization and leadership in dynamic contexts, although they do not clearly acknowledge the limitations of this approach, and the way in which the terminology of complexity theory should (not) be applied. Some authors offer normative statements that could even prove to be damaging when put in practice.

Complexity theory nonetheless has the potential to significantly contribute to thinking about church and leadership in three additional ways to those described above.

1. Complexity theory can make us aware of our existing mental and theological models ('paradigms') about church, change and leadership, thereby posing the question whether these are appropriate in the twenty-first century.
2. The adoption of a 'complexity framework' of thinking – with its notions of change and interconnectivity – by members of a missional community may in practice lead to positive results, such as more participation in decision making, working within networks, the nurture of relationships, the sharing of information, and the creation of meaning.
3. Complexity theory can contribute to the understanding of radical organizational change – including change in church communities – and of the role of leaders in such circumstances. Generally speaking, leaders in communities that show emergent, self-organizing behavior are seen to destabilize the organization, facilitate mutual interactions, encourage innovation, and interpret change (i.e., sense-making).

#### *12.3.4.1 Concluding Reflections*

One of the most well-known thinkers about missional leadership today, Alan Roxburgh, points to the importance of the interconnections and interrelationships between members of a congregation. He expects new maps for missional life to emerge out of these "diffuse, noncentralized nodes of energy and creativity."<sup>39</sup> Empirical research on this point is in its infancy. It would be worthwhile if future researchers would analyze the processes, the "transformative potential",<sup>40</sup> and the eventual effects of conversations that are held within a specific missional community by using insights from complexity theory. This could be accompanied by a theological approach that focuses on the role of the Holy Spirit, who as "God's empowering presence"<sup>41</sup> can be believed to be especially

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<sup>39</sup> Alan J. Roxburgh, *Missional Map-Making: Skills for Leading in Times of Transition* (San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 179.

<sup>40</sup> Ralph D. Stacey, *Complex Responsive Processes in Organizations: Learning and Knowledge Creation* (London: Routledge, 2001), 177.

<sup>41</sup> Gordon Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996).

concerned with, among other things, creativity, insight, wisdom, discernment, relations, leader emergence,<sup>42</sup> and, indeed, forms of ‘energizing’.

Another interesting research question concerns what leadership processes can be described in a church community that aims to engage an adaptive challenge, thus embarking on a path of nonlinear change. Most of the current books on church leadership are focused on the person of the leader, or on ‘how to’ approaches to forms of linear change. There is a lack of empirical research, conducted in different contexts, that spell out what nonlinear change in Christian communities consists of, how this differs from linear change, and why and how this requires different leadership interventions.

A third research question is about the relation between complexity theory and theology in the EMC. For example, what are resemblances and differences between discussions in the EMC and those in Anglican circles in the 1920’s?<sup>43</sup> And to what extent, and how, do adherents of the new science in the EMC acknowledge and deal with the theological implications of the emergent-evolutionary worldview that is behind it, for example in regard to hamartiology and theological anthropology?

## 12.4 What Views on Leadership Exist in the EMC and How Can These Be Interpreted in a Larger Theoretical Framework?

EMC writers seldom define their exact understanding of leadership. They do, however, use various leadership ‘labels’ and metaphors that provide clues as to what is deemed important in respect to leadership. According to EMC literature, leadership is, or should be, characterized by (in alphabetical order) being adaptive, apostolic, authentic, catalytic, collaborative, community-led, connective, creative, cultivating, curating, discerning, dispersed, distributed, enabling, emergent, empowering, equipping, facilitative, flexible, hubbing, implicit, incarnational, innovative, inspirational, interpretative, intuitive, kingdom-like, missional, moral, networking, nonlinear, organic, passionate, permission giving, participative/participatory, pioneering, post-Christendom-style, postmodern, plural, relational, representational, responsive, sense-making, serving, shared, spiritual, shared in a team, transformational, and visionary.

The most important leadership metaphors are the following: amateur/learner, apolo-gizer, catalyst, change agent, cultivator, cultural architect, (symphony) conductor, dancer, empowerer, entrepreneur, environmentalist, ethical steward, fellow journeyer/fellow traveler, friend, gardener, includer, information alchemist, jazz band leader, listener, midwife, narrator, poet, quest creator, seeker, spiritual artisan, spiritual guide, spiritual

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<sup>42</sup> Julianne R. Cenac, “Leader Emergence and the Phenomenological Work of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2,” *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 3, no. 1 (Winter 2010), 123-135.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. W. Mark Richardson, “Evolutionary-Emergent Worldview and Anglican Theological Revision: Case Studies from the 1920s,” *Anglican Theological Review* 92, no. 2 (Spring 2010), 321-345.



entrepreneur, spiritual sage, team builder, systems thinker, traffic controller, and tribal story teller.

In addition to leadership labels and metaphors, we obtained the following findings on different aspects that have to do with leadership.

1. *Church structures.* The way that a Christian community should be structured depends on the particular 'ecosystem' in which it is located. In order to fit in the emerging post-modern context – seen as a fluid, shifting environment – church structures need to be open to change and centered on a clear purpose. Ideally, these structures have the characteristics of a self-organizing system: i.e., being conducive to conversations, decentralized, dynamic, flat, flexible, fluid, highly relational and network-based.

2. *Authority and power.* Authority and power are not institutional, positional, or based on credentials. Leaders are accorded authority because of their character, demonstrated competence, gifts, and moral or spiritual authority. The aspiration within emerging churches is that power is shared among multiple persons, with the implication that accountability is high for both leaders and followers. This entails the importance of having a shared core identity and shared values.

3. *Decision making.* Churches need a platform where important decisions are made and where accountability is located – something like a leadership team or staff. Within such 'communities within the community' mutual decision making and mutual agreement ('consensus') are sought after.

4. *Leadership roles.* The emphasis is on diversity, since this is an asset in a pluralistic culture, and different people have different gifts. On both theological and sociological grounds, leadership teams are deemed indispensable.

5. *Leadership tasks.* These primarily have to do with (1) helping in the processes of envisioning and sense-making; (2) empowering people and tending to relations, e.g. creating a climate of trust, mutual support, and learning, and stimulating spiritual formation; (3) building appropriate organizational structures and networks that facilitate the emergence of new things.

It appears that many of the preferred characteristics of leadership, as referred to in the EMC, match with the so-called Organic leadership paradigm that has recently come to the fore in leadership scholarship. An overall characteristic of this paradigm is that *leadership* – thought of as the interactions of reciprocal influence among people – is central, instead of the *leader* as a person. Leadership, then, is not necessarily vested in particular individuals. Although there might be formal leaders in various roles (including that of a teacher or a mentor), in the Organic paradigm authority and power reside in the collectivity of the organization. In this way, the commitment, accountability and responsibility of members increase. In addition, a diversity of opinions is valued. Reaching decisions often requires extensive communication and negotiation, however. An additional leadership role in this regard is dealing with conflicting interest groups.

In the Organic paradigm, furthermore, members need to orientate themselves on shared values and a common vision, because there is little control or direction from above. The source and protector of these need not be one particular leader, however; vision and values emerge out of the intensive and continuing interactions among participants.

Organizations that are characterized by a form of Organic leadership often are network-based, with a simple and flexible structure ('adhocracies'). This has to do with the emphasis on continuous and fast change – both within and outside the organization – and on flexibility, creativity and innovation. In the Organic leadership paradigm, people have a clear awareness of the dynamic environment – the social, cultural and physical milieu – in which they are located. An important goal is to stay organically connected to this environment. The very low affinity in the Organic paradigm with hierarchy and bureaucracy is related to some specific cultural factors: Organic organizations are low in power distance equality, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity. Furthermore, individualism is discouraged in favor of a form of 'in-group collectivism'. Finally, the underlying philosophy is based upon the new science perspectives of unpredictability, self-organizing systems, complexity, uncertainty, and focus on the whole system, rather than just on its parts. Rather than bringing order and control, an Organic leader's role is to contain the anxiety of its members as they operate on the 'edge of chaos' where they are creating and discovering a new future that is difficult to foresee.

The overall conclusion is that the Organic paradigm (or model) matches the main perspectives on leadership within the EMC, which is helpful to better understand and evaluate them. Seven insights in particular may be gained from this comparison. These can be summarized as follows.

First, the Organic leadership paradigm has only recently come to the fore, and it is likely that it is not widely known (or used) yet. Second, thinking in terms of leadership paradigms helps us to realize that mental models of leadership held by church members will determine who or what is seen as (adequate, benevolent, effective, etc.) 'leadership'. Third, the emergence of this paradigm is directly related to the fact that many organizations today are facing very dynamic and complex environments. By enabling people to interact freely, share ideas, experiment with new strategies and learn from the outcomes, Organic leadership promotes the variety and creativity that is necessary for the next adaptation to emerge. Fourth, organizations operating within an Organic leadership paradigm often have a structure that is organic, 'project-like', or networked. In a network structure, the leader's role is different from in a more bureaucratic one. Fifth, Organic leadership is particularly to be found in organizations in which creativity and innovation are highly valued. A parallel can be noted here with participants in the EMC who belong – at least to a large extent – to the sociological category of the 'creative class'. Sixth, reaching decisions in an 'organic' church often requires extensive communication and negotiation. There may be more politics involved in emerging churches than meets the eye. Seventh, the Organic paradigm fits the reconfiguration of authority that

is the result of the ascendancy of digital technologies. If the cultural impact related to the new mobile and digital social media further increases, churches will need many persons who are willing and able to contribute to leadership in an Organic paradigm. Leaders within the Emerging-Missional milieu are among the pioneers in this field.<sup>44</sup>

#### 12.4.1 Concluding Reflections

Leadership is important in every organization, including churches – today perhaps more than previously was the case. As Russell L. Huizing suggests, “Even a cursory review of ecclesiology over the past 100 years shows the tectonic changes that have shifted ecclesial leadership responsibilities far beyond anything imagined by a vast majority of pastors in times past.”<sup>45</sup> The topic of leadership, however, is not always a subject of deep reflection in Christian congregations and church councils, or among pastors. By putting forward, in effect, an Organic leadership paradigm, the EMC challenges Christians and churches to ask important questions such as: What is *our* (perhaps unacknowledged) ‘leadership paradigm’, and what do we perceive the consequences to be for various aspects of leadership such as authority and power, leadership tasks and roles, organizational structures, and decision making procedures? What cultural influences were involved in its emergence and what sub-cultural aspects are influential in how it operates today? Who has to gain by our leadership paradigm remaining what it is, and what is the ‘price’ we pay for not considering alternatives? What Scriptural principles can we discern in regard to various leadership aspects and what would they mean for our own sub-cultural context?

On this last point we also have a question for the EMC, which may be worthwhile considering for further research. In the EMC, a form of team leadership is generally advocated, with the theological argument that the Trinity itself functions as a team. As humans created in God’s image, EMC leaders seek to follow this divine model (cf. 2.4.1). We think that this is an attractive interpretation, but that it carries with it associations with Western democratic thinking. The model in the Scriptures, however, is not that of a democracy, but “that of leaders delegating authority and empowering those appointed to lead.”<sup>46</sup> Most importantly, “both the authority to delegate authority and the means of empowerment find their ultimate source in the leader’s own delegated

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Carol Merritt, pastor at Western Presbyterian Church in Washington, D.C.: “Technology and social media have become a way of being for us. They have become extensions of how we think, communicate, and form community....When we do something as simple as hold our smartphones in our hands, we know that the culture is shifting in an exciting and sometimes terrifying fashion....Within our denominations, it is often the hyphenated Christians who experiment and explore in the midst of these changes.” Carol Howard Merritt, “Net-A-Narratives: The Evolution of the Story in Our Culture, Philosophy, and Faith,” in Snider, ed., *The Hyphenateds*, 68.

<sup>45</sup> Russell L. Huizing, “The Seasons of Ecclesial Leadership: A New Paradigm,” *Journal of Biblical Perspectives in Leadership* 3, no. 1 (Winter 2010), 87.

<sup>46</sup> Perry W.H. Shaw, “Vulnerable Authority: A Theological Approach to Leadership and Teamwork,” *Christian Education Journal* 3, no. 1 (2006), 121.

authority from God.”<sup>47</sup> Our question is where and how exactly this ‘ultimate source’ finds expression in emerging churches, especially in those that are not denominationally affiliated and that therefore may lack a theology of ordained leadership.

The topic of authority in emerging churches, in our opinion, deserves to be researched more in-depth, for example by using Max Weber’s well-known ideal types of basic origins of authority: *traditional* (authority rests “on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under them”),<sup>48</sup> *charismatic* (authority rests on the exemplary or extraordinary character of the leader), and *legal/rational* (authority is based on rational values and rules, a typical example being the bureaucratic organization). The interesting point is that authority within communities in the Emerging-Missional milieu does not seem to particularly fit within any of these types; it is a much more hybrid phenomenon. We think it is useful to get this sharper into view, both empirically and in theoretical terms.

Another research topic is this: What exactly do people in different congregations expect from their leaders when they are confronted with rapid and complex contextual changes; how do they view their own role and responsibility, and in what respects do these expectations and views match with the Organic leadership paradigm?

## 12.5 How May Perspectives on Leadership within the EMC Be Conceptualized within a Definition of ‘Missional Leadership’ and What Does This Stand for?

In the EMC, as elsewhere in the Christian world, definitions of leadership focus primarily on ‘influence’, or certain personal leadership traits. We do not want to suggest that these approaches are wrong (for one thing, leadership surely has to do with influence), but we do think that a more encompassing definition – one that is also informed by theology – can be helpful for pastors, theological educators, and others who are involved in leadership. We propose that the following definition of missional leadership is appropriate to capture EMC views on leadership and church practices: *Missional leadership refers to the conversational processes of envisioning, cultural and spiritual formation, and structuring within a Christian community that enable individual participants, groups, and the community as a whole to respond to challenging situations and engage in transformative changes that are necessary to become, or remain, oriented to God’s mission in the local context.*

This definition helps to discern three interacting leadership dimensions that have to do with (1) vision, (2) people and relations, and (3) organization that are operative in any Christian community. In this sense the definition is descriptive. The characterization is prescriptive in that it proposes a specific way for envisaging leadership in churches that

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<sup>47</sup> Shaw, “Vulnerable Authority,” 121.

<sup>48</sup> Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, transl. A.M. Henderson and T. Parsons (New York: The Free Press, 1947), 328.

aim to be mission-shaped. Its main terms can be explained in a summary fashion as follows.

*Missional.* The adjective ‘missional’ is chosen instead of – for example – emerging, organic, or participative, because missional leadership directs the attention to the focus on mission, which is what we found to be emphasized within the EMC.

*Conversational processes of...* The expression ‘conversational’ calls attention to the fact that conversations are thought to be important in the EMC, in particular for the leadership dimension that has to do with ‘envisioning’. The term ‘processes’ encourages us to observe the different ways in which people within a Christian community exercise leadership without being in a formal leadership position.

*Envisioning.* The term ‘envisioning’ can be interpreted as a communal exercise of theological imagination and discernment, in which Bible study and prayer play a central role, in order to identify the identity and calling of the congregation.

*Cultural formation.* Cultural formation entails community building, providing for core religious and pastoral functions and rituals, and acting on the community’s culture in such a way that the missional vision of the community is facilitated.

*Spiritual formation.* Spiritual formation has to do with furthering a missional spirituality within the community. Participants are to be equipped for interpreting and engaging culture, and to live the gospel in word and deed in their own contexts and workplaces.

*Structuring.* Structuring refers to aspects of organizing and management, but also to the task of analyzing the chosen structure(s) from time to time and suggesting adjustments to keep the focus on the mission and vision of the community.

*Within a Christian community.* In the definition, the term ‘community’ is used because this is seen as essential in the Emerging-Missional milieu.

*Individual participants, groups, and the community as a whole.* The conceptualization of missional leadership focuses not just on individuals, but also on groups, i.e. specialized subsystems that do – or do not – accomplish some aspect of the community’s purpose. The ‘community as a whole’ refers to the dynamic entity that consists of, but is greater than, the sum of its constituent parts.

*That enable...to respond...and to engage.* Missional leadership ‘enables’, i.e. it facilitates individuals and groups to act and, more specifically, to respond and to engage. Missional leadership is particularly focused on responding to challenging situations, in distinction from technical problems. As mentioned earlier, conversations within the community are thought to be important in this regard. The verb ‘engage’ refers to the sense of deep involvement and inner motivation that is necessary for the concrete activities that will have to be carried out – which include prayer, and studying the Bible together – if the community wants to become, or remain, oriented to God’s mission.

### 12.5.1 Concluding Reflections

Leadership is a many sided, complex phenomenon that no definition can be expected to fully capture. The definition of missional leadership that we offered above does not, then, claim to be 'definitive'. We do think, however, that it provides a useful lens to bring into focus what is going on in a Christian community, and that it can help to shape the acts of leadership that are necessary in a certain context. To make this more concrete: our conceptualization entails that in an 'ideal' missional church it will be the shared vision and values, as well as the perceptions of God's agency, that motivate people and that help them to make decisions on their course of action. The organizational structures facilitate, and the cultural dimension – for example the experience of belonging – supports. Of course, the reality mostly will not conform to this ideal. Rather, there may be many churches today in which the order is the opposite: the structures (and the people who manage these) dominate, while there is no shared vision, hardly any expectation of God to act, and little sense of community.<sup>49</sup> The definition of missional leadership may help to draw attention to this reality. At the least, then, it may function as a useful heuristic instrument.

When missional leadership functions as described in the definition, it is a process that leaves no individual or group in a specific community untouched. Clearly, missional leadership is not just something that is only relevant for those in positions of formal leadership.<sup>50</sup> We do think, however, that formal leaders (ordained or not) have a special responsibility for monitoring the dynamics between the three poles of vision, culture, and structure; to act upon one or more of these dimensions according to their personal calling and gifts; and to provide input for the processes of spiritual formation.

Moreover, we think that it is necessary for churches aiming to be missional to develop into a *learning community*, in order to mature and effectively fulfill their mission to the world. Rather than stressing permanence, uniformity and stability, a learning community cultivates impermanence and change (albeit not on core values or vision). It expands its capacity to explore and clarify its purpose; it nurtures new and expansive patterns of thinking; it modifies behavior to reflect new knowledge and insights; it sets free collective imagination and aspiration; and it is proactive in the building of relations, also with individuals, communities and organizations outside its own community.

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. Haasnoot, *Neem je plaats in*, 50-55.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. the interesting musings of Philip Clayton, whose understanding of Christian leadership has been "turned upside down" after a conversation with the emerging church leader Spencer Burke: "Today, the leaders who influence our faith and action are those who convene (or moderate or enable) the conversations that change our life – or the activities that transform our understanding of ourselves, our world, and our God. It could be an older Christian who convenes discussions at a church, a house, or a pub. It could be Shane Claiborne leading an activity at The Simple Way on Potter Street in Philadelphia – perhaps gardening in the communal garden – that gives you a sense of community that you've rarely had but always longed for. It could be a website or a blogger that you frequently go to, where you read others' responses and add your own thoughts." Philip Clayton, "Theology and the Church After Google," *The Princeton Theological Review* 17, no. 2 (Fall 2010), 15-16.

This last point deserves some extra comment. Generally speaking, in order for learning to occur, we need to be confronted by someone, or something, beyond the horizon of what we know already. In other words, there needs to be *distance*, and difference. Paradoxically, however, for learning to happen, the other person, object, or idea needs to come *close* as well, in order that we may discern truth, and ‘take it to heart’.<sup>51</sup> To apply the principle to the church that aims to be a missional learning community: it needs to conceive of itself as a ‘borderland church’.<sup>52</sup> That is to say: boundaries need to be crossed<sup>53</sup> and relationships with others (e.g. non-Christians, or adherents of other religions) need to be established – which indeed is characteristic of many emerging churches. Stated more formally, the cultivation of relations within the polarity of *distance/foreignness* and *closeness/familiarity* is what characterizes many communities in the Emerging-Missional milieu, which have “created safe places for people who are...seeking diversity and ‘encounter’, instead of homogeneity and familiarity, where they are amongst people who do not share similar beliefs or identities, but still in the process find community: *difference + closeness*.”<sup>54</sup> Participants in this milieu embark on conversations with the other and thereby “lean into awkwardness”<sup>55</sup>; they talk about these experiences, and learn from them. This means (we submit) that even if we disagree on theological points, we can still learn from participants in the Emerging-Missional milieu *how to learn*.<sup>56</sup>

Strategic venues for further research are those that focus on – preferably longitudinal – descriptions of processes within missional communities in different contexts and the role of leadership therein. Some questions to be asked are these: What is the behavior of (informal or formal) leaders in such a community and how does this compare to that of

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. Parker Palmer, “truth involves entering a relationship with someone or something genuinely other than us, but with whom we are intimately bound.” Parker Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known: The Spirituality of Education* (San Francisco: HarperCollins 1983), 31. Parker provides a captivating reflection on the etymological connection between ‘truth’ and ‘troth’ (as in the ancient vow “I pledge thee my troth”): “To know something in truth is to enter troth with the known, to rejoin with new knowing what our minds have put asunder. To know in truth is to become betrothed, to engage the known with one’s whole self, an engagement one enters with attentiveness, care, and good will. To know in truth is to allow one’s self to be known as well, to be vulnerable to the challenges and changes any true relationship brings. To know in truth is to enter into the life of that which we know and to allow it to enter into ours. Truthful knowing weds the knower and the known; even in separation, the two become part of each other’s life and fate.” Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Gary Nelson, “In a global world, the borderlands are...the places where ‘Christian faith, other faiths, and unfaith intersect’.” Gary V. Nelson, *Borderland Churches: A Congregation’s Introduction to Missional Living* (St. Louis, MI: Chalice Press, 2008), 5.

<sup>53</sup> “No matter how well we understand the times we are in, it is impossible to be effective as the church without crossing boundaries of comfort, culture, and convenience.” Ibid., 4.

<sup>54</sup> Lloyd Chia, “Emerging Faith Boundaries: Bridge-Building, Inclusion, and the Emerging Church Movement in America,” (PhD diss., University of Missouri-Columbia, 2010), 234.

<sup>55</sup> Chia, “Emerging Faith Boundaries...,” 335.

<sup>56</sup> Interestingly, the dialectic between the different and the familiar highlights another aspect of the metaphors that are so much used in the EMC: they can assist in learning processes, because “metaphorical speech maintains itself precisely in this tension between *familiarity* and *foreignness*” [emphasis added]. Ben Vedder, “On the Meaning of Metaphor in Gadamer’s Hermeneutics,” *Research in Phenomenology* 32 (2002), 206.

leaders in traditional churches? What does the behavior of followers<sup>57</sup> consist of, and how can the interactions between followers and leaders<sup>58</sup> be described? What is characteristic of the dimension of culture in various missional churches and how is this dimension acted upon by leaders? What insights can be gained from an analysis of how ‘furthering a missional spirituality’ is given form in communities with different local contexts? How does a specific missional community develop into a *learning* community and what does this entail for individuals, groups, and (formal) leaders?

## 12.6 What Are Salient Views and Practices Concerning Leader Education within the Emerging-Missional Milieu?

In order to equip leaders for missional churches, in recent years, Missional Leadership programs (sometimes other names are used) have started, leading to degrees such as Doctor of Ministry, Master of Divinity, Master of Theology, Master in Mission, or to various specified certificates.<sup>59</sup> By reflecting on the different aspects of our conceptualization of missional leadership, in combination with the use of scholarly literature about (theological) education, we developed a framework of nine questions. We then used this framework to give a coherent description of leader education that is given form according to EMC ideals, as found in representative literature and in the course catalogues of the institutes that we mentioned above. The outlines of this description can be sketched as follows.

1. *Vision/purpose.* Theological education has a clear purpose, which is shared by the faculty, staff and students and which determines the mission, culture, structures, and curriculum of the school. Generally speaking, in Europe/in the West the proposed purpose

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<sup>57</sup> The term ‘follower’ is used here in a technical sense – it is not an expression that is commonly used in the EMC. Although the word may carry associations of conformity, weakness, and passivity, research points out that followers can contribute substantially to the effectiveness and cohesion of the group they belong to, e.g., “by maintaining cooperative working relationships, providing constructive dissent, sharing leadership functions, and supporting leadership development.” Gary Yukl, *Leadership in Organizations*, sixth ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006), 135.

<sup>58</sup> In particular from the viewpoint of (social) psychology, this is highly important question. It needs to be acknowledged in this respect that leadership is “not necessarily an interaction between leaders and followers as individuals but rather between leaders and followers as group members. What leaders need to do...is to get people to think in terms of the collective interests. By the same token, what they need to do is to be seen to act in the collective interests.” S. Alexander Haslam, Stephen D. Reicher, and Michael J. Platow, *The New Psychology of Leadership: Identity, Influence and Power* (Hove, UK: Psychology Press, 2011), 44

<sup>59</sup> These programs are, among other places, offered in Australia: e.g. at The Australian College of Ministries, and Forge Mission Training Network; in Canada: e.g. at Tyndale Seminary; in the Netherlands, at the Theological University in Kampen (TUK); in Switzerland, e.g. at IGW International; in the United Kingdom, e.g. at the Centre for Missional Leadership, and at Cliff College, Cranmer Hall, the Cymru Institute for Contemporary Christianity, Ridley Hall, Springdale College, St. John’s College, and Wycliffe Hall; and in the United States: e.g. at George Fox University, Luther Seminary, Northern Seminary, Northwest University, Rochester College, The Seattle School of Theology and Psychology (formerly called Mars Hill Graduate School), and Western Theological Seminary.



for the twenty-first century is to equip leaders for a missional church in a postmodern, post-Christendom context.

2. *Cultural formation.* The culture of a theological school is that of a learning culture, with all that this entails, including fitting physical (i.e., architectural) arrangements. In addition, students are part of an intentional holistic community that is personally supportive and spiritually enriching.

3. *Spiritual formation.* The spiritual formation of students has been made a priority of the school, and is integrated in the curriculum as a whole. It is given form in and outside the seminary community, by both students and faculty.

4. *Institutional dimension.* The curriculum, educational philosophy, and teaching practices have consequences for the structures of a seminary. As is recognized in Luther Seminary (St. Paul, Minnesota), for example, a theological school is not only an organization for learning, but also a learning organization. Furthermore, in some of the educational institutes, such as Western Theological Seminary, the processes of organizing and decision making are characterized by concrete attempts to apply aspects of a missional theology, such as sufficient time to listen to each other and to God.

5. *(Local) context.* Theological seminaries which offer Missional Leadership programs work closely with local churches, particularly with transforming, missional congregations. The *missio Dei* and, consequently, the people of God in their mission form the center of and provide perspective for theological studies. Leaders-in-information are trained by the theological school and an actual missional community *in tandem*.

6. *Curriculum.* In the curricula of all the institutes that we researched, four subjects receive serious attention (next to modules on Biblical Studies, and other subjects): missiology or missional theology; culture or context; leadership; and spirituality or spiritual formation. Furthermore, modules are often multi-, inter- or cross-disciplinary, and have a cross-cultural or international scope. Also, as is characteristic of the curriculum, theory is in service to praxis.

7. *Teaching methods and educational philosophy.* Forms of experiential and inductive learning are emphasized, rather than 'imparting information' in a secluded environment. The background reasoning is that people learn best when they are actively involved in a challenging context, and then receive the appropriate personal support (coaching or mentoring) and the necessary knowledge or theory. Instead of individualistic learning and competitive performance, collaborative learning is central. While these and other aspects of educational philosophy receive attention, theological reflections about the underlying experiential and constructivist learning theories and their naturalistic assumptions are not critically dealt with.

8. *Teachers.* The appointed teachers are themselves (missional) leaders and able team players; they model Christian character, and integrate their personal faith and scholarship.

9. *Students*. It is acknowledged that good candidates for leadership are hard to find. Local congregations take special responsibility for recruiting potential students. Young people with leadership skills, passion and vision are identified and given a task, accompanied with coaching or mentoring. If found suitable, they are subsequently challenged to continue their studies in a seminary or in some other way.

### 12.6.1 Concluding Reflections

Influential voices within the EMC think that not only churches, but also seminaries need to change their paradigms and practices thoroughly: from maintenance to mission, from church at the center to a kingdom framework, and from equipping managers to equipping spiritual directors and leaders. We agree that in many instances, theological education – in so far as it is meant to educate for leadership – needs to be re-envisioned in the light of recent societal and cultural changes, and that a focus on missional theology is important. We are therefore of the opinion that EMC proposals such as articulated in Robert Banks' *Reenvisioning Theological Education*<sup>60</sup> should be a topic of study and conversation among theological educators in the Netherlands and elsewhere. Moreover, in our estimation, the various programs on Missional Leadership that have been developed in recent years constitute forms of *avant garde* theological education from which much can be learned, also by institutes that do not focus on educating missional leaders. For those seminaries that would choose to start doing so, this would likely entail a process of adaptive rather than mere technical change. The reason for this is that the different aspects of theological education – varying from how its purpose is conceived of to how students are recruited – are highly interrelated. This brings us to our next evaluative remark.

Based on our framework of questions we think that it is crucial for a theological institute to have a clear – preferably theologically grounded – and shared vision on what exactly its purpose and mission is. Furthermore, it is important for theological administrators and educators to – from time to time – systematically review to what extent the internal culture (including the aspects of community and spiritual formation), the organizational structures and decision-making procedures, the contacts with the local context, the curriculum, the teaching methods and educational philosophy, the selection of faculty, and the recruitment of students are all in alignment with the purpose and mission of the school.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Robert J. Banks, *Reenvisioning Theological Education: Exploring a Missional Alternative to Current Models* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999).

<sup>61</sup> The point is that mission statements alone do not lead to a clear sense of purpose. "The mission needs to be operationalized in a way which leads to the elements of the mission influencing all aspects of organization practice." Graham Peeke, "Mission, Education and Change: The Concept of Institutional Mission and its Application to the Management of Further and Higher Educational Organisations," (PhD diss., Cranfield Institute of Technology, 1992), 251 and 167.

On the topic of missional leader education much research needs to be done, for example, on the following questions. Are there any differences between church leaders who have had substantial schooling on the subject of missional leadership and those who have not, and if so, what are these differences? What conclusions can be drawn from this comparison? What can theological educators and church leaders learn from programs such as provided by Spiritual Leadership Inc<sup>62</sup> that provide not only *leader* education – which is focused on the individual (e.g. the future pastor) – but also *leadership* education, thus encompassing teams and the general culture of a specific church?

Another topic on which we plead for more research, concerns the educational philosophy that is adopted in the Emerging-Missional milieu, especially in so far as it is informed by experiential and constructivist learning theories. Although we do not question the legitimacy of these theories as such, they are often based on pragmatic reasoning<sup>63</sup> and naturalistic assumptions in which thinking is the attempt to bring the individual (bodily) into accord with the environment,<sup>64</sup> and knowledge and ideas are seen as important because of their evolutionary value, not because they are true in any ‘ultimate’ sense.<sup>65</sup> Such convictions also shine through in popular concepts such as the ‘learning organization’.<sup>66</sup> We are interested in research that deals with the ontological, epistemological, anthropological, ethical, and theological questions that come up in this respect.

## 12.7 What Are Salient Views and Practices Concerning Leader Education within Three Theological Institutes in the Low Countries?

Chapter 10 centers on discovering, describing and analyzing views on leader education in the Protestant Theological University (PThU), located in Kampen, Leiden and

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<sup>62</sup> SLI coaches work with teams or groups of people within an organization to discover, develop, and deploy spiritual leaders to bring greater missional effectiveness to their organizations and thereby transform their communities. Bryan D. Sims, “Complexity, Adaptive Leadership, Phase Transitions, and New Emergent Order: A Case Study of the Northwest Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church,” (PhD diss., Regent University, 2009), 34.

<sup>63</sup> Our intention is not to disqualify pragmatic (philosophical) reasoning, but there is an important issue that needs to be addressed. It is well put forward by Louis Menand: “There is a sense in which history is lit by the deeds of men and women for whom ideas were things other than instruments of adjustment. Pragmatism explains everything about ideas except why a person would be willing to die for one.” Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club: A Story of Ideas in America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), 375. Menand refers in this context to, *inter alia*, Martin Luther King.

<sup>64</sup> Robin L. Zebrowski, “Mind is Primarily a Verb: An Examination of Mistaken Similarities Between John Dewey and Herbert Spencer,” *Educational Theory* 58, no. 3 (2008), 316.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Deborah Seltzer-Kelly, “Deweyan Darwinism for the Twenty-First Century: Toward an Educational Method for Critical Democratic Engagement in the Era of the Institute of Education Sciences,” *Educational Theory* 58, no. 3 (2008), 297. See also chap. 9, n97.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Sherrie Bartell, “Today more than ever before, survival of the fittest means survival of the ‘fittest to learn’.” The popular term used to describe this regenerative organizational species is the ‘learning organization’.” Sherrie Myers Bartell, “Training’s New Role in Learning Organizations,” *Innovations in Education and Teaching International* 38, no. 4 (2001), 354.

Utrecht;<sup>67</sup> the Theological University in Kampen (TUK), and the Evangelical Theological Faculty (ETF) in Leuven, Belgium. The focus was on those MA programs that are meant for future pastors and leaders of congregations, the so-called *predikantenopleidingen*. We used the same framework of questions as we did in our research on leader education in the Emerging-Missional milieu, albeit with a few minor alterations to make it suited for semi-structured interviews with teachers and for focus group sessions with fulltime students. The empirical research done in the three universities was limited in scope, and our methodology was not designed to compare the three institutions in a very thorough way. What follows is a short summary of our findings.

1. *Vision/purpose*. The purpose of the PThU and the TUK is to educate future pastors and leaders of the church, while the ETF somewhat more explicitly states that its purpose is 'to equip leaders'. In the experience of students in all three institutes, the emphasis in their educational trajectory is especially on theological scholarship and their being schooled as theologians, and less on leadership development.

2. *Cultural formation*. Few students and faculty of the PThU, especially in Utrecht, feel that they are part of an intentional holistic community that is personally supportive and spiritually enriching. The TUK and the ETF fare better on this score.

3. *Spiritual formation*. Spiritual formation is not characteristic of the PThU curriculum that we researched, except for the few programs that are offered in Hydepark Seminary.<sup>68</sup> It receives more attention in the TUK, and is even more in focus in the ETF.

4. *Institutional dimension*. The institutional dimension of the PThU is thought to be bureaucratic and formalistic, especially in its Utrecht location. The TUK and the ETF, which are both much smaller, are not characterized in this way.

5. *(Local) context*. The importance of the (local) context for learning is acknowledged in the ETF and in the PThU, but less so in the TUK.

6. *Curriculum*. The curricula of the three institutes are mostly structured along the 'classical' model. This means that few programs are offered in which the disciplines of Biblical studies, systematic theology, church history, and practical theology are thoroughly integrated. The topic of leadership receives some serious (albeit primarily theoretical) attention in the ETF, less so in the PThU, and little in the TUK.

7. *Teaching methods and educational philosophy*. The teaching methods most often used are lectures by teachers, with students writing papers and holding presentations on certain topics. The three institutions characteristically do not make much use of innovative teaching methods that are aimed at integrating theoretical reflection, learning from experience, and personal leadership development. As to the educational philosophy of the PThU, the TUK and the ETF, we found that (a) 'competency' language is especially emphasized in the PThU; (b) the TUK appears to be more appreciative of a constructi-

<sup>67</sup> From September 2012 on: Amsterdam and Groningen.

<sup>68</sup> In the new curriculum, the element of spiritual formation has been strengthened. PThU Director of Education, e-mail message to author, January 21, 2012.

vistic vision on learning than the ETF, at least on paper; (c) all three institutes are challenged to explicate their educational philosophy in more detail.

8. *Teachers*. Being excellent scholars is a prime requisite of the faculty. Being a good teacher or having a solid record in regard to leadership or spiritual formation is secondary.

9. *Students*. No traceable efforts are found concerning the active recruitment and selection of future missional leaders – individuals who are likely to be found in the sociological category called the ‘creative class’ (Richard Florida).

### 12.7.1 *Concluding Reflections*

Our first conclusion is that the thrust of the education that is provided in the PThU and the TUK, and to a large extent in the ETF as well, is focused more on equipping scholars or theologians than it is on developing leaders, although the intention is to do both. It may be helpful to conduct solid empirical research concerning the question what exactly is needed to develop the leadership skills of (future) pastors who are more comfortable with scholarship than with leadership.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, the attention that is being given to the topic of leadership in the curriculum does not have the insights of complexity theory nor the Organic leadership paradigm in view. If it is true that in the near future a different kind of leadership will be in greater demand in churches – one that is shared and collective, geared to a dynamic context, open for innovation, and connected to digital social communication practices – there is a gap here that needs to be attended to.

Second, only a few teachers and students appeared to have any deep – both experiential and theoretical – knowledge about what is currently going on within the Emerging-Missional milieu outside the Netherlands and Belgium, including experiments with and reflections on missional leadership and leader education, community, spiritual formation, and worship. We think that this milieu deserves more attention, because much can be learned from it (cf. 12.2.3).

Third, in these theological institutes and their constituencies there appears to be (as of yet) little urgency around the active recruitment and selection of future missional leaders. We plead for a change on this score, although it will take special effort to gain the

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<sup>69</sup> In our research, we didn’t find scholarly studies on this question, although such sources can be found in other fields than that of theology. For an example, see Nicole Annette Sawka, “From Scientist to Manager: Developing Leadership Skills for Early Career Scientists,” MA thesis in Leadership and Training (Royal Roads University, 2006). One of her conclusions is that *mentoring* is of crucial importance. This is confirmed by Margaret Inman, who mentions also the following strategies: encouraging the formation of networks and providing guided critical reflection on practice, whilst promoting opportunities for collective articulation and sharing of experiences. See Margaret Inman, “The Journey to Leadership: A Study of How Leader-Academics in Higher Education Learn to Lead” (EdD thesis, University of Birmingham, 2007).

interest of persons who suit the profile of a missional leader, and to offer them programs that match with their talents.<sup>70</sup>

Fourth, neither of the three MA programs that we researched can be said to be very innovative in regard to dealing with the challenges that the ‘information revolution’ puts to educational approaches. Also, we think it would be an improvement if more teaching methods are adopted that are aimed at integrating theory, experience, and personal development. In this respect much can be learned from practices in the Emerging-Missional milieu, or in secular quarters.

Fifth, it is difficult to ascertain the educational philosophy of the PThU and the ETF, and to what extent it is shared among the faculty (or students). The TUK does have a more extensive didactic learning concept worked out on paper, but all three institutes have, as of yet, to answer the following three basic questions: (1) How do we define learning, and on what scholarly basis? (2) How can this definition – and the theory of learning – be theologically articulated? (3) What does this entail in practical terms for teaching methods and for teachers in the *predikantenopleiding*?

Finally, while much scholarly research is going on in the PThU, the TUK, and the ETF, these institutes are not used to being an object of research themselves. We noticed however that the interviews and the focus group sessions did not only help us acquire the needed data, but that they also stimulated the reflection of both teachers and students on – among other things – the topics of leadership and leader education, and on what is currently happening within the Emerging-Missional milieu. We therefore think that those institutes who want to foster forms of ‘double loop learning’ – in which assumptions are questioned, situations are viewed from various perspectives, paradigms are compared and contrasted, and so on – might do well to encourage researchers to come and investigate their own educational programs.<sup>71</sup> This would include Roman-Catholic seminaries, which fell outside the scope of our research.

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<sup>70</sup> Suited teachers should be recruited, too. As Stefan Paas notes, most theology professors have been educated within the Christendom paradigm. “This means that they have loads of experience in the field of preaching (for Christians, that is), pastoral work and church politics, but very little in social justice advocacy, leading Alpha courses and creative evangelism. As a consequence, they speak with confidence about matters that concern the inner life of the church and hesitantly, abstractly and without much inspirational force about mission.” Stefan Paas, “Prepared For a Missionary Ministry in 21st Century Europe,” *European Journal of Theology* 20, no. 2 (2011), 126.

<sup>71</sup> We therefore think that it is regrettable that the Theological University (Apeldoorn) of the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and the seminary of the Restored Reformed Church (Amsterdam) did not want to participate in our research (see 10.1).

## 12.8 In the Light of Proposals for and Practices of Leader Education as Conceived of in the Emerging-Missional Milieu and in Recent Scholarship, What Challenges Can Be Formulated for Theological Institutes in the Low Countries?

Chapter 11 is as a whole devoted to formulating the challenges that are hinted at in our final research question. There is no point in merely repeating what we already spoke about above. Bearing chapter 11 in mind, then, the main challenges, i.e., opportunities for development that are – to a greater or a lesser degree – relevant for the PThU, the TUK, and the ETF, and perhaps for other theological institutes as well, can be summed up in five points:

1. Adopting ‘leadership’ as an integrative focus of the *predikantenopleiding*.
2. Accentuating the topic of leadership in the curriculum.
3. Thinking through the implications of educating for *missional* leadership.
4. Giving more sustained attention to spiritual formation.
5. Adopting a larger variety of teaching methods that may help to develop critically reflective leaders, such as case-in-point teaching and coaching.

The overall challenge for theological institutes in the Low Countries – and the final statement of this thesis – can be formulated as follows. We think that the EMC – despite the sometimes disturbing rhetoric that a few of its proponents tend to adopt – justly emphasizes that deeply influential changes in Western culture and society place the church, its leadership, and its institutions for leader education at a *crossroads*. This means that strategic choices will have to be made concerning vision and mission, in relation to what communally may be discerned, through the leading of the Spirit, regarding God’s will and agency.

Being familiar with both milieus, we intend with this thesis to stimulate a ‘crossing of the roads’ for participants in innovative communities in the Emerging-Missional milieu and those who belong to the milieu of ‘inherited church’. With all our substantial differences, we may recognize (in the rich sense of the French word *reconnaissance*<sup>72</sup>), enrich and support each other as brothers and sisters, belonging to the same kingdom, in the light of grace, love and reconciliation that shines down from the cross of Christ.

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<sup>72</sup> While the dictionary provides more than twenty different meanings for *reconnaissance*, Paul Ricoeur distinguishes three main ones: the establishment of *knowledge*, recognition in a *reflexive* sense, and acknowledgement in the sense of *gratitude*. All three meanings are appropriate for the kind of recognition that we plead for. Paul Ricoeur, *Parcours de la Reconnaissance* (Paris: Stock, 2005).

